

ing county, ending in Clay County. The query with me is, are they moving the line of their limit up a little? Dr. Mohr reports all of these plants as very small.

“The wood ferns suffered most from the fire. Where they grew in profusion some three or four years ago, there are now only a few scattered plants left, and they were not mature when we were in the mountains in August.

“The intensity of the fire is shown by the fact that where the timber had been cut away and two or three tops had fallen together, I found there mountain stones burned till they fell to pieces, and where a stump had burned out the rocks looked as though a house had burned down on them.”

BRIDGEPORT, ALA.

A collecting trip in southern Florida*

JOHN DONNELL SMITH

The thirty-two years that have gone by since Austin and I made our moss-hunting trip to South Florida seems to have left me with a poor recollection of its incidents, whether scientific or personal.

At that time the geography of the region bordering the upper Caloosahatchie River was imperfectly understood, and its botany was, of course, even less known. In fact, it was then supposed that the river has its rise in Lake Okeechobee, and I expected to pass by boat into the big lake and there do most of our botanizing. It was not until the following year that it was discovered that a pine barren ridge separated Lake Flirt from Lake Okeechobee.

*A letter received by Mrs. N. L. Britton, in reply to a request for information regarding a collecting trip made by Coe F. Austin and John Donnell Smith, in 1878.

For several years previously I had been in active correspondence with that eminent bryologist, Coe F. Austin, but had not known him personally. I had been a purveyor to him of much material of Musci and Hepaticæ, and was indebted to him for many critical determinations. At my invitation, he joined me at Cedar Keys, Florida, in March, 1878. In a good-sized sail boat of slight draft of water, and with a man to cook and help, we sailed down the gulf coast, chiefly keeping inside of the islands and reefs, and landing frequently to collect. In Charlotte Harbour, Pine Island was our headquarters, and its shell mounds presented an interesting and novel moss flora.

When the Caloosahatchie River became too narrow for sailing, we secured a whitehall sixteen-foot rowboat, and thus completed our ascent of some ninety miles up to Lake Flirt. At that season nearly the whole region was under water, and it was often difficult to find a dry spot for pitching our little tent. Much of the collecting was done while wading up to the knee or even higher. On one such wading trip we came across *Ophioglossum palmatum* L., and it was not until we had access to current literature that we learned we were not its first discoverers outside of the tropics. That very month Dr. A. W. Chapman was publishing in the Botanical Gazette its occurrence on the banks of the Caloosahatchie River. Here, too, in extensive mats on the surface of stagnant water, we met with *Wolffiella floridana* (Donn. Sm.) Thompson. The new or little known mosses were in the following years described by Austin in the Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club.

You are better qualified than I am to appreciate the importance of our collections during this expedition and the value of Austin's scientific work. But I can certify to his enthusiastic enjoyment of this his introduction to

a semitropical world, and to my own unqualified enjoyment of his society.

BALTIMORE, MD., 31 DECEMBER, 1910.

On the study of ferns

PHILIP DOWELL

A few suggestions and occasional reflections on the study of ferns are here presented for the consideration of the reader in the hope that they may be of help to some and of interest to others.

The particular course of plant study to be pursued, like our calling in life, need not be hastily decided on. That will depend largely on circumstances and individual bent and capacity, and need not even be considered at the outset. Some of the most noted botanists have begun by simply going afield and enjoying nature. By constantly associating with plants they have become interested in them and more or less acquainted with them, and later they have become more deeply interested in some special line of plant study.

In order that the student may arrive at the safest conclusions and secure the best results in the study of ferns, he should be acquainted with the plant as it appears in its natural state. Field study should be pursued side by side with the other lines of fern study, whether we emphasize the taxonomic, morphologic, physiologic, pathologic, ecologic, economic, or other phase. When the student is acquainted with the plant as it grows in its natural surroundings, he can to more purpose study its behavior in the laboratory, or elsewhere outside of its natural state and under changed conditions. He can also with more certainty determine the natural relation-